CARMINA · VARIA

By · C · Kennett · Burrow

To James B. Pinker,
With regards. —

C: Kennett: Burrow.

Jan: 23, 1912.

CARMINA VARIA



Joachim Patinir.

National Gallery, London.

CARMINA VARIA

BY

C. KENNETT BURROW

LONDON

MARTIN SECKER

NUMBER FIVE JOHN STREET

ADELPHI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ASTECK'S MADONNA
THE WAY OF THE WIND
THE FIRE OF LIFE
THE LIFTED SHADOW
PATRICIA OF THE HILLS
THE YEOMAN
LONDON DEAD, & OTHER POEMS

TO SIDNEY H. SIME

HERE are no haunted castles, goblin-lit,
None of your demon crew!
And yet, old friend, it seems not all unfit
To dedicate to you

These simple songs of summer and quiet things,
Of moods that search the soul,
Of sparse grain reaped in bitter harvestings,
Of one Saint's aureole.

For you, too, love the stillness that inspires
The hidden heart of earth;
You, too, have watched for the revealing fires—
Stir of the spirit's birth.

Together we have seen the invading dawn
Summon the London hosts;
Together, in your studio far withdrawn,
Peered upon memory's ghosts.

Take, then, these various songs in quiet wrought:
Frail though the fruitage seem,
'Twas nourished in the sunshine of my thought,
The dewfall of my dream.

September 2, 1911

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NOTE

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THE QUEST OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER

AT evening, by the grey plain's edge,
Where shiv'ring grass and vibrant sedge
Made shrill marsh-music, Christopher
The giant stood, strength's minister.
Much barren travel had made lean
His mighty limbs since he had seen
The great king make the Sacred Sign ;
And, turning, he had thrust the wine
Aside, and leaned across the board
To catch the minstrel's soaring word.
For many times the bitter name
Of the World's Torment turned to flame
The king's scarred cheek, and he had bowed
Before the whispering courtier crowd
And crossed himself. Thereat his guest,
Strong Christopher, had forward pressed,
Crying, "What dost thou, O my king?"
Then fell the words, "I do this thing

Because I fear the bitter name
Of Satan." Then a sudden shame
Shook Christopher. "What do I here?
I serve no king un-king'd by fear.
Lo, I will fare until I see
This Satan who is lord of thee."

At evening, on the bare plain's rim,
He stood and pondered. Coldly dim
The far waste lay, and over it
Shrill bat and noiseless owl did flit.
All colour faded, all was grey;
It seemed the end of the last day
His years should know, the utmost hour—
Stripped like a petal from life's flower.
And still he pondered, and behold,
A blade of light, a point of gold,
And forth there marched, as to high wars,
The glad battalions of the stars.
Then Christopher bowed low and said,
"Whom shall I serve?" He lifted head,

And lo, on the wide plain he saw
A marching army, held in awe
Of him whose awful front outshone
All heavenly lights save One alone.
So vast the army was it shook
The plain as shakes a tiny brook
When the fierce east its ripple stays
And the last stricken leaf decays.
The noise of it was like the sound
Of deep coast-caverns swept and drowned
In charging seas, and as it went
Black-symbolled banners swayed and bent
Above close ranks, and clarions blew.
Giant Christopher stepped forth and drew
Towards the leader : " Who art thou ? "
Then Satan with uplifted brow
And voice like sudden bells at morn
Wind-blown across sea-wastes forlorn,
Made answer : " I am king and lord
Of the whole earth." At that great word
The strong man bowed himself and said,

"Thee will I serve." Then onward led
That leader, and the dawn upsprang
Behind low hills, and thickets rang
With bird-song, and the budding earth
Lay naked as a babe at birth,
Dew-washed, and pure, and wondrous
mild.
Even as a mother o'er her child
The sky stooped joyous, and the sun
With elemental colours spun
A christening robe for the new day.
Then did an hundred bugles bray
Against the dawn, and rank by rank
The awful army slowly sank
To rest, as swathes before the scythe,
Or as blown buds when storm takes tithe
Of summer. In the midst there rose
A single tent. As spent fire glows
Through ashes, or as one great cloud,
Swelling with wasteful thunder loud
And pregnant with a brood unblest,

Labouring with storm against the west,
Is shot with evening, so it glowed.
Above it a broad banner flowed
In stream o' the air, a symbol dire
Of terror and consuming fire.
Upon its sombre ground were wrought
Such shapes of ill as vanquish thought,
Wherein were blazoned strangely well
The subtle heraldries of Hell.
Christopher lay without the door
Wakeful, and saw the heavenly floor
Flush redly as though wheeling wings
In counterchange of fiery rings
Bred colour from delirious speed.
But the prone army took no heed,
Being vassals not to day, but night,
To whom the dawn-fire on the height
Was signal of accusing light.

As one who dreams within a dream,
Till all his changing fancies seem

Dumb slaves to some strange elfish sway,
Without the tent the giant lay.
No footstep stirred, no clarion blew ;
From dew of dawn to twilight dew
Such silence reigned as must have been
Ere the sad world put forth new green
Above subsiding waters, when
Men suffered for the sins of men.
At nightfall swelled a golden note
Imperious : on the dusk afloat
It swept to heaven's unyielding bars,
And died among the constant stars.
Again it sounded ; then uprose
That mighty army, and as flows
Water to water, so it drew
Together, and the banners flew
Like night-birds straining 'gainst the wind
On gusty moorlands. All resigned
To inner thought and broodings dim
Giant Christopher fared forth with him
To whom the kingdoms of the earth

Were subject, who in bitter mirth
Gave stones for bread, for burning drouth
Fire to the fever-writhen mouth.
The visible soul of darkness swung
Through darkness ; his imperious tongue
Chanted of conquest ; reeling fight
Surged through the pastures of the night,
And ever, as the tale was told,
A vague and muffled murmur rolled
From that vast army following,
Lauding in fear their direful king,—
A murmur like to drums afar
Athrob upon the edge of war.
Then silence, and again the day
Troubled the dark with misty grey.

Below, a swirling river raced,
Bastioned by brooding hills that traced
Pinnacled blackness 'gainst the sky.
A track wound downward, and thereby
A gaunt and weathered cross of wood

Desolate in the dawn-wind stood.
Then that great leader turned aside :
And Christopher, all heavy-eyed
With weariness and musings dim,
Beheld the humbled crest of him
Named the World's Torment, bowed to
earth.
There very fear had very birth.
Christopher saw, and all his veins
Pulsed fire of anger : " He who reigns
O'er the dominions of the dust,
Master of kingdoms, lord of lust,
Moulder of battles, red of blood,
Quails at a wayside cross of wood !
Soon shall the desert lion fear
The chirrup of the grasshopper ;
Soon shall the ruffled snake caress
With harmless slime the leopardess ;
Soon shall the bullock slay the priest,
Soon shall the suckling tear the breast !
Whom living dost thou fear, O thou

Poor boaster of the humbled brow?"
Satan, with wry and twisted lips
Reluctant, slow as poison drips
From the pressed poppy, spoke the name
Of Jesus, shaking with his shame.
Then Christopher: "What do I here?
I serve no king un-king'd by fear.
Lo, I will fare until I see
This Jesus who is Lord of thee."
He gazed, and lo, he stood alone;
No banners blew, no armour shone
In that wide wilderness of stone.

Christopher by the river's brim
Slumbered. In vision came to him
An old man beautiful with age,
Who seemed the herald and the mage
Of that deep peace which lives between
The blossoms in an orchard green.
His simple words were rippling song:
" O Christopher, the great and strong,

Save thou the weak who cry to thee ;
Succour the children at the knee,
Succour all virgins undefiled,
Succour all women great with child ;
Stoop to earth's service, and behold
All heaven shall blossom into gold.
Be thou the guardian of the ford,
Servant of all, the water's lord."
He woke to see the invading night
Move silently from height to height ;
He saw the river's swirling spume
Glimmer like moon-flowers through the
gloom ;
And in the soul of him uprose,
Beyond all mortal overthrows,
The joy that only service knows.

It seemed to patient Christopher
That to the bleak ford sinister
All travellers of the world did come,
Seeking alway some distant home

Beyond the gardens of the sun.
Servant he was to every one
Who shrank from the tumultuous sweep
Of sucking eddies cold and deep.
All day his mighty shoulders bore
A tale of lives from shore to shore ;
No toll he took for labouring breath
So that he snatched death's toll from death.
Thus in love's service laboured he
Through changing seasons ceaselessly,
Till age came on him unaware.
Then on a night exceeding fair,
All garnitured with tissued gold
Spun by the spinning worlds, and cold
With deep serenity of frost,
He heard the pleading of one lost.
Behold, a child whose lifted eyes
Ensphered all childish sanctities,
Whose voice was clear as note of bird
When the first dawn-wind breathed, and
stirred

The leafy coverts of the day.
His little hands were clasped to pray,
His little feet were bruised and torn
From stony ways and biting thorn.
" Fear not, lost nestling of the nest,
For I will bear thee in my breast
Through this most direful, ravening flood,
Thou little mannikin of God ! "
So in his bosom lay that flower;
And as he moved the quiet hour
Was hurled on tempest. Thunder shed
Delirious turmoil on his head,
And the wild water neared his heart :
" Oh, heavy, heavy, child, thou art,
Yet for thy sweet sake I am strong
To shield thee from the doom of wrong."
Above his heart the water surged,
Yet on the giant blindly urged
His failing strength : " Oh, heavier thou
Than cleft rock of the mountain's brow
Wherewith I slew a puny score ! "

His feet dragged on the rising shore;
Outworn he stumbled to his knees,
And on the instant all was peace.

"Oh, Christopher,"—the voice was sweet
As when celestial viols meet
In concord of pulsating praise,—
"Thou hast redeemed all ruined days.
Thou held'st, within thy bosom curled,
Him who for ransom of the world
Bore of all sins the dreadful weight,
Thereby to open Heaven's gate;
Didst bear through that dividing flood
The very Mannikin of God."

RISE, DAFFODIL !

RISE, daffodil, unsheathe your golden
flame,
Let your green pennons shake !
Face the chill east, and manfully proclaim,
How soon the South shall wake !

Breathe, South, upon the firstling violet,
That all alone shall blow
In glimmering dusk of woodlands that
forget
The penury of snow.

Upon Spring's forehead set your tender
seal
O South ! Arise, and run
Swiftfoot as morning, and to us reveal
Heralds of life begun !

BIRD SPRING

WHAT note, Bird Spring, what note,
Breaks from your golden throat,
Making the silence sing ?
What message trills from you
With nightfall and the dew,
What note, Bird Spring ?

Ah, joy and sorrow meet
In perfect bridal sweet,
Wed with your music's ring.
What word says each to each
Too fine for human speech,
What word, Bird Spring ?

If I might snare you, Bird,
Before your life has stirred
A wider wing,
And tame you to my hand ;
Then might I understand
Your song, Bird Spring !

Bird, I shall never know
The rapture and the glow
Of you that sing :
With one low call of peace
You shake your wings and cease,
You fly, Bird Spring !

CUCKOO SONG

THE voice of May I hear again
About the greening dales,
Now belling through the fluttered rain,
Now loud where sun prevails.

It is the very note of earth
In earth's most buoyant hour,
The rapture of the joy of birth,
The summons to the flower.

It stays not here, nor lingers there,
But ever moves along,
This floating music in the air,
This voice that is not song!

SUN AGAIN

DAY after day the smoky pall
Befouled old London Town ;
Dreary, inert, funereal,
Grim darkness held us down.
Ghostly obscure, each brooding square
And every toiling street
Was choked in sullen, acrid air :
Life moved on leaden feet.

To-day, behold, the jubilant sun
Scatters the stifling dread !
We see the stately river run,
The blue's clear overhead.
Almost across the bustling ways
There comes a breath of spring ;
The gaunt trees stir themselves in praise,
The very housetops sing !

THE ROUND

DOES the spring sunshine blind
The new-lit primrose stars
In hidden dells that bind
Within their living bars
The summer green?

Does the live, rhythmic breath
Of winds from overseas
Sing of the peace of death
To daffodils on leas
That southward lean?

Behold, the purple haze
Of gradual, bursting leaf
Shadows the budding ways
Where, bowed in lowly grief,
The snowdrop dies.

Alas, for beauty dead !
Welcome the joy new born !
Death, and the bridal-bed,
Hope, and the glad birth-morn,
And weeping eyes !

A SPRING NIGHT

CLEAR silence floods the valley deeps, the night
Is quick with stars, a breathless dusk wherein
The world seems as a tremulous dew-drop poised
On a white blossom of eternity.
If God should shake the tree! Yet wherefore so
Shed sudden ruin, when death stands and plucks
From all the living orchards of the world?
Not yet shall He upgather all the stars
To glut the golden treasury of Heaven,
Nor leash the winds, nor bid the seasons cease,
Nor loose the seas from bondage of the moon;

But still from barrenness shall beauty spring,
And bloom from dust, and after fevered drouth
Fall laving rains and ministering dews...

Blossom and nightingale, music and bowering bloom
Aquiver with the passion of the song:
Moonlight and bloom and nightingale: soft airs
Mingle sharp fragrances of young green earth
To brim the cup of ecstasy. I lean
Forth to the night, and into its great heart
Am folded, folded deep, and understand
The ancient peace that breathed through Paradise.

INEXPLICABLE

A GOLDEN end of evening burned
Low in the quiet west ;
Song ceased, and mated birds returned
To the unfinished nest.

I was aware of breaking leaf
Thrilling the twilight cool,
And an obscure and ancient grief
Descended on my soul.

Always, when happy Spring returns
It, too, returns ; I cry
Unto the twilight's smouldering urns
" Help, Lord, or else I die ! "

Some nameless horror slowly creeps,
Shadowed, and still, and cold ;
I plead from out the bitter deeps,
" Lord, Thy strong hand to hold ! "

It passes, and again I draw
Safe and delicious breath.
None shall resolve this secret awe
Save all-resolving Death.

WIND AT EVENING

ALL day the undulant weald has hummed
With living heat ; the thickening blood
In my all-languid ears has drummed,
Token and seal of solitude.

The pools of poppies in the wheat
Unruffled lay from dawn to noon ;
From noon to westering flame the heat
Still held their vagrant souls in swoon.

No cloud made kind the withering blue ;
The pleading of the burdened ground
Failed in the passive air, and drew
No answer from the vault profound.

Lord of the little breezes, Lord
Of laving vapours, Lord of fruits,
Speak thy divine prevailing word
And utter coolness round life's roots !

Lord of the shattering storm, withhold
Thy sudden wrath, thy day of doom,
Till all our corn be garnered gold,
And all our good fruits carried home! . . .

Out of the sunset soft there blows
The little wind that laves and cools,
And lo, a rain-mist sweeps and flows
Across the rippled poppy-pools !

IN AN ORCHARD

OVER me the grave winds go,
Voyaging beneath the noon ;
Through the orchard's gloom and glow
Strays the echo of a tune ;
Tune in whose few notes are set
Old desire and new regret.

Here are apples gold and red,
Mellowed by the patient sun ;
Round about and overhead
Light and shadow deftly run ;
Leaves make murmur, grass is deep,
All the orchard breathes of sleep.

Happy boughs of apple trees
Bending to the apples' weight !
Happy orchard secrecies,
Guardians of the sacred gate
Wherethrough autumn slowly moves,
Smiling on the land he loves !

Over me the grave winds go,
Voyaging beneath the noon ;
Through the orchard's gloom and glow
Strays the echo of a tune ;
Tune in whose few notes are set
New desire and old regret.

PINE TREES

AGAINST the raying western sky
Adrift with flying gleams,
Stood three stark pine trees; and thereby
I counted o'er my dreams.

And this, I said, was golden Hope
That lit the hills of joy;
Now, on this sunless, downward slope,
The man forgets the boy.

And this, I said, was silken Love
That hid in secret vales;
Now barren are the bowers thereof,
Silent the nightingales.

And this, I said, was buoyant Faith
That searched the morning's height;
Now, on the winding road to death,
Faith plunges into night.

Against the raying western sky
Adrift with flying gleams,
Stood three stark pine trees; and thereby
I counted o'er my dreams.

WHEAT AND CLOVER

ON one side slept the clover,
On one side sprang the wheat,
And I, like a lazy lover,
Knew not which seemed more sweet—
The red caps of the clover,
Or green gowns of the wheat.

The red caps of the clover,
They nodded in the heat,
And as the wind went over
With nimble, flying feet,
It tossed the caps of clover,
And stirred the gowns of wheat.

O rare red caps of clover,
O dainty gowns of wheat,
You teach a lazy lover
How in his lady meet
The sweetness of the clover,
The promise of the wheat.

TO MY LADY: IN AUTUMN

NOW must I woo thee in autumnal ways,
And bind for coronal about thy brows
A fading garland for love's fadeless bays,
And strew before the portal of love's house
The fallen leaves of praise.

Lo, I will garb in metaphors of gold
Thy body's beauty, cast about thy breast
A dainty vesture, fold on golden fold,
Broidered with fantasies of love confessed
For charm against the cold!

And weave from waist to feet a kirtle fine
Starred with the glinting gems of loving
words.
About its hem I subtly will entwine
Red berries of delight, and singing birds
Hidden in trailing vine.

And I will gird thee with a girdle fair
Wrought of youth's gold and passion's
perfect red,
And set within the shadow of thy hair
The last white rose that wistful Autumn
shed,
A blossom pure as prayer.

Thus, being clad in Autumn's fashioning,
Thou movest through a world by change
made wise!
Yet, though the woods with mournful
music ring,
Still ever leaps and lives within thine eyes
The light and lure of Spring.

POPPIES

BETWEEN brown folding furrows
A belt of poppies stood ;
All in the noontide silence,
In happy solitude,
Between brown folding furrows
They glowed the praise of God.

All in the noontide silence
I laid me down to sleep
In a red, red world of poppies
Where rare dream-fancies creep ;
All in the noontide silence
I fell on slumber deep.

In a red, red world of poppies
In happy solitude,
Between brown folding furrows
I woke to find life good ;
And I and the red poppies
Were one in praise of God.

WHEATFIELDS

BELOW me, glimmering to the sky,
Acres of golden harvest lie ;
Enclosed within the living grain
Food for tired body, aching brain.

There waves the man-sown grain of God,
There His wide ensigns float abroad :
To what high purpose, nobly wrought,
Shall all this store of life be brought ?

Who sows the seed shall reap the grain,
Who reaps shall sow the seed again :
Thus shall the spirit reap, and draw
From food transmuted, spirit's law.

The body feeds the spirit yet
With food for passion and regret,
And in those ripened fields I see
Many a sad Gethsemane.

What fire of love lies there in thrall,
What dragging pain, what bitter gall ;
What life dishonoured and what cries
Of spiritual agonies !

I see in those still fields the sum
Of all who to life's birthright come ;
Sorrow and gladness, labouring breath,
Terror, magnificence and death.

Who sows the seed shall reap the grain,
Who reaps shall sow the seed again :
Thus shall the spirit reap, and draw
From food transmuted, spirit's law.

THE THRUSH ❦ ❦ ❦

FRONTING the sullen dawn you sing
Triumphant; every fluted note
That sets the dank air vibrating
Ruffles your happy feathered throat.

You sing the future into view,
You stir the sap, you call the bud,
You open deeps of April blue,
And April ardours thrill the blood.

On your bleak elm-spray hope is born
To flood the world with love's increase:
On this reluctant Christmas morn
You scatter largesses of peace.

Nor peace alone, but eager trust
In high adventure, conquest high:
Faith that fruition is not dust,
Faith that we shall not wholly die!

Christmas Morning, 1910.

THE ROBIN'S MESSAGE

HIS little song at dawn
Summoned me, and I thought—
From sleep but half withdrawn—
What tidings has he brought?

I listened, and again
The impudent, dainty call!
I peered through the blurred pane
And saw the first leaves fall.

AN AUTUMN MOOD

THROUGH sodden autumn mists I moved
A stranger and an alien ; these
Were not the blessed fields I loved,
Nor those my own benignant trees.

This was a world I knew not, fouled
By strange distemper, leprous stain,
Where hooded horrors stirred and prowled
Through sombre avenues of rain.

No hearthstone more should glow for me
In that lost land from whence I came :
Passed was my little sovereignty,
Vanished the record of my name.

Through sodden autumn mists I moved
A stranger and an alien ; these
Were not the blessed fields I loved,
Nor those my own benignant trees.

IN AUTUMN

O SOUL of me that lives august
Through tyrannies of time and sense,
Still lord of this inglorious dust
Fearful of its own impotence,
When shall the bitter warfare cease,
When strife be folded into peace?

Not till the prostrate pulses fail,
Flutt'ring their last poor, tenuous beat;
Not till the final glooms assail
The ways untrod of mortal feet;
Not till my life's most perilous star
Is drowned in the waste waves of war!

Yet, for a little season, here
The dewfall and the twilight come,
And red autumnal dawns ensphere
A mirage of the spirit's home:
The moving air about me weaves
A fantasy of golden leaves.

O earth that I have loved, O earth,
Mother of mine, whose ripe breasts gave
Nurture to this proud human birth,
Thine is the power to purge and save :
To thee all laud, all grace be given
For gathered good, for imaged Heaven !

AUTUMN SOLITUDE

HERE utter solitude bereaves
The heart even of sorrow ; slow,
Slow as tired Time, the drifting leaves
Float, cling, and settle : trees arow
Brood in the misty hollows deep
Like kings discrowned who may not weep.

Love, might we grieve a little space!
But here nor tears nor smiles may live,
Nor, shadowed in your dreaming face,
May I behold one fugitive
Fond memory awake, nor see
In those quiet eyes the soul of me.

Close yet aloof, most cold, most dear,
In this dead hour all sacred things,
All intimate ardours, passionate fear,
All stirring of the spirit's wings,
Are like old garments laid aside,
Poor gauds of a forgotten bride.

Beloved, let gladness sweep again
Up the broad tideway of your soul ;
Welcome the awful joy of pain,
Snatch at the morning's aureole !
Alas, you move not, will not speak :
O broken lives, O hearts to break !

DETACHMENT

TO-NIGHT I walked with leaves for
company,
The autumn whirl of leaves ; wind-blown
as they.
It seemed the stars were leaves of yester-
day,
Adrift from Time's disastrous, shaken
tree.
Of what had been, or what, alas ! might
be,
I had no thought, no sense ; my mortal
clay
Thrilled to the moment, as the hurtled
spray
Thrills in brief freedom from the im-
prisoning sea.
Betwixt two vague eternities I moved,
Nor cared to question either. I, a leaf,

Tossed in tempestuous twilight, had no
grief,
No fear, no sorrow for the dead I loved:
In that intense detachment I became
A leaf, a star, a clod, a frost, a flame.

PLOUGHING

ALL day I watched the slow plough trace
The stubborn furrow, and all day
I had a sense of breathing space,
Of richness, as of one whose clay
Thrilled to earth's way.

The mortal part of me found voice
To sing with immortality ;
With changeful nature to rejoice,
Beyond all change clearly to see
Immutability.

The greater and the lesser part
Were bravely symbolled, two in one :
Even as heart that answers heart
Brown earth and the engendering sun
Made union.

O splendour of the perfect plan !
To win through dust and clogging sense
To knowledge of the needs of man ;
To slough all blind subservience
In fire intense

Fed with soul-fuel : so to snatch
The gold of life, and leaving all
The baser, boldly to unlatch
The final portal—not to crawl
Fearing hope's fall !

THE EXILE

"It is sixteen years to-day since we printed the news of Stevenson's death. It should be added that the English language is no longer allowed in Samoa, and the natives now use German."
Pall Mall Gazette

WET blows the wind through English
woods to-day,
The songless woods unheralded of Spring,
And in the sober cerements of decay
The year lies sorrowing ;
But unto him, across cold seas and lands,
No message carries of our love's increase;
We only reach, with unavailing hands,
Towards his place of peace.

By him the impiteous Shadow tarried
long—
Half friend it seemed and half intolerant
foe,
But still his life-blood pulsed impetuous
song
In unpolluted flow.

Then did he drink of silence and deep
night,
Joined hands with sleep and dreamed the
dream of rest,
And, to a farther exile, from our sight
Fared on a stranger quest.

Where Tusitala tuned our English tongue
To sweeter music than our Island knew,
Where his great spirit's largesse was far
flung
To every wind that blew,
Now to the sacred hill-top comes no
sound
Of English speech to him untimely lost:
And through the mystic "Island Nights"
profound
Wanders an exiled ghost!

THE CHILD SPEAKS

OH, years ago, I used to see
A fairy in our apple tree ;
A tiny man all green and gold,
With wrinkled face, and eyes so bold.

He used to drop an apple red,
Hard as a bullet, on my head ;
I'm sure he must have laughed, although
I couldn't hear him there below.

And there were other fairies, too,
Who made my good dreams all come true,
And once I saw a fairy boat
Sail where the water-lilies float.

But when I learnt to read, oh then
Away flew all the little men !
I think they really must have known
How dull the fairy books had grown !

Why don't the clever folks who write,
Sitting and toiling half the night,
Just try to make the fairies come
Back to the earth that was their home?

All these dull books I'd give to see
That fairy in our apple tree,
To watch the pretty fairy boat
Sail where the water-lilies float.

THE STING

AH, had you loved me long ago,
Time had been other for us twain :
This comes too late, a blinding blow
That stings my whole life into pain !

Why did you rouse me from my sleep ?
Dead silence had become you best.
Now your awakened voice will keep
Perpetual murmur round my rest.

Dear, do you see the end of this,
Or are you blind for old love's sake ?
Suppose we meet, join hands, and kiss,
Drown all regret and, smiling, take

Love's best and worst, and be at one ?
You hold my hands; but here's the sting:
It means, before all this be done,
A ruined troth, a broken ring !

HE wore a wrinkled stock and hat,
An old green coat of doubtful fit ;
He always had a proverb pat,
Loved wine, but never tasted it.

Once, long ago, he had been "young,"
And, as he spoke the word, he seemed
To cackle with an easier tongue,
And his old eyes awoke and gleamed.

He used to wander round the Park
In solitary, slow content,
And, with a graceful gesture, mark
Approval of the pace we went.

At last, Death softly called his name ;
And then, with clear and tranquil brow,
Without a touch of fear or shame,
He met the summons with a bow !

TWIN SISTERS

Inscribed to C. and W. J.

YOU are love's double blossom fair,
Incarnate hope, incorporate dream,
Born to make glad our mortal air
With shafts of the immortal gleam.

Yet of this vital world you are,
One with the mighty power that keeps
Accordance betwixt star and star,
And holds the balance of the deeps.

Ours is your beauty ; unto us
The treasures of your hearts are given,
And from their riches' overplus
We buy the very gold of heaven.

All things are ministrant to you :
The summer blossoms for your sakes,
The wind at dawn is yours, the dew
At evening, when the spirit aches

With strange excess of longing ; yours
All music from clear wells of sound,
And all sealed mystery that allures
To heights unscaled, to depths profound !

RESPITE

ALONE I paced the miry ways,
Aloof I watched the humming crowd,
Musing on dim, forgotten days
Far off, remote as peak or cloud.

A nameless presence haunted me,
A subtle strangeness thrilled my soul :
It seemed that I and destiny
Drew slowly near the final goal.

Soon, soon, I thought, my life will close,
This haunting shadow will unveil
The portal of my Father's house,
And I be shut without the pale.

Soon shall the voice of perfect Law
That tunes the orchestra of space
And holds rebellious stars in awe,
Pronounce my sentence of disgrace. . . .

Yet still I pace the miry ways,
Aloof I watch the humming crowd,
Musing on dim, remembered days
Far off, remote as peak or cloud.

TO ONE WHO REMEMBERS

I DREAMED that you and I were safely
housed
In a deep-wooded valley, green and still,
Where only nesting birds and bees
caroused,
Primrose and daffodil.

There went a river singing like a girl,
Who wakes at dawn to robe herself, and be
For some strong lover the one sacred pearl
That hides in deepest sea.

And there were hills that gladly took the
sun
At daybreak and at noontide and at eve,
And sound and silence that beguiled as one
Too simple to deceive.

I stirred, and woke: the city streamed
and roared,
Wet pavements gleamed, life was at
sergeant's drill:
Yet still my fancy holds, as future hoard,
Primrose and daffodil!

SLEEPLESS

HOW shall my soul escape this awful dread?
The sinister tide of darkness, wave on wave,
Washes about me. Is there none to save
Me, the sun's singer, from this imminent doom
Of death that is not death? The spectral room
Is like a charnel of the loveless dead.

No leaden hours are these, but hours intense,
Vibrant, compact of memory and desire:
The trampled ashes wake to venomous fire,
Swung censers waft their perfume over strange

Old altars that no grief of man may
change,
Heaped with the gems of wrecked magnificence.

O for a breath of the new air of Spring!
Not a leaf thrills: the bitter silence broods
Like the discorporate soul of solitudes
Haunted by unborn spirits: so might be
The utter deeps of the remotest sea,
Unstirred, immutable, unblossoming.

The hounds of sense are hot upon my
track,
Pestilence-breathing, maddened with
pursuit;
Foul images and fancies dissolute
Spring instant to the clamour of their call,
And on each staring and moonlighted wall
Shadows obscene writhe on a viewless
rack.

Fear numbs itself, and sinks to impotence:
I strive no more, I lie outdone and faint,
Raising no pleading hands to any saint,
Nor gibing as a poor Life's heretic.
I only hear the murderous minutes tick
Their own most ominous doom's sharp
eloquence.

This is the respite between strife and strife,
The vigilant truce of the encompassed
soul,
Ere once again tumultuous battle roll
In urgent waves, with standards stark
unfurled,
Till the insurgent, vehement ranks are
hurled
In a last onset up the slopes of Life!

One instant did I dream I dreamed, that
sleep
Had fallen like a mantle; then I heard

The first faint cheep of an awakening bird,
And knew that I but dreamed the dream
of rest :
Yet that sweet stirring from a hidden nest
Brought piteous refreshing : I could weep.

Ah, then soft waftures of divinest breath
Blew from the hills of morning, and I lay
All tranquil for the signal of the day.
I clung to beauty through all weariness,
I wrested peace from uttermost distress,
I leapt to Life, and trampled under Death !

OUT OF DARKNESS

To W. B.

I HAVE no heart to speak to you to-
night ;
For those poor sheddings from the muse's
wings—
Words, dropped in grim defiance, are
too slight
To probe the troubled mystery of things.

I hold your hand, and all the abandoned
years
Resurgent crash about me, crest on crest
Toppling to swithering foam. If I had
tears
Might be assuaged this tumult of unrest !

The old lights gleam and pass, and every
cape
Looms through the mist with one lone
star for guide ;

Yet how should this poor fragile bark
escape
The wandering lights that lure, the
sucking tide?

I hold your hand. Oh, let suave silence
keep
The unutterable secret till that hour
When from her womb the living child
shall leap,
Crying aloud the crowning word of
power—

Power to unloose or bind, to save or
slay,
To humble or exalt; then men shall know
What blight befouled the promise of the
day,
What murk of midnight blossomed into
snow!

Now question strangles question ; speech
is dumb
Of mere excess : I cannot understand !
Dreams pitiful and most impiteous come
Flocking, insistent. Let me hold your
hand.

TO ALL MOURNERS

I DO not bid you, tired ones, cease to weep—
There is a time for tears;
Nor do I bid you less securely keep
Remembrance of past years:
I bid you only stand as those who reap
Amongst life's living ears.

I bid you still look eastward for the light,
And, musing on the dead,
Draw to yourselves the beauty and the might
That with their spirits fled:
Thus, doubly strong, toil onward through the night,
Fed by this sacred bread.

The granaries of Death cannot withhold
From you the living seed:

The empty husk, the hollow tarnished
gold,
His guerdon and his need;
But unto you still live the noble-soul'd,
Still live, and love, and plead.

I do not bid you, tired ones, love them
less,
I bid you love them more;
So, in the hour of utter loneliness,
When soul and sense implore,
They shall, with holy benediction, bless
From their serener shore.

LAMENT

(H. D. L.)

NO more for you the snowdrop cold
Speaks resurrection from the dust ;
No more shall your glad eyes behold
The valiant crocus-spear upthrust.

Your western daffodils no more
Bloom for the heart that loved them all ;
Brave daisies star the meadow-floor,
The mating thrush is lyrical,

But you, O faithful heart, are numb
To singing bird, to blossoming clod,
To summons of Spring's hurrying drum—
These are with me, you are with God.

IN THE DUTCH GARDEN, HAMPTON COURT

IN this deep, drowsy afternoon,
Vassal of silence and the sun,
I hear the mystic under-tune
Of life a-blossom round me run.

Colour is music to the soul
Enthralled by colour ; beauty here
Is like a great musician's scroll
The eye interprets for the ear.

On that embowered westward wall
Wistarias' grape-like clusters sleep ;
Brave tulips man the borders all
Like warriors marshalled at the keep.

The fountain's plash is silence' song
Transmuted to a silver shower,
Laving the languid airs that throng
About the cool brink, hour by hour.

Soft puffs of perfume come and pass,
Soft doves' wings flash against the blue,
Soft shadows lie along the grass,
And all the living world is new.

O how shall mortal memory hold
The essence of this sun-thrilled peace,
How hoard it as the spirit's gold,
How cherish for the soul's increase ?

How keep inviolate this sense
Of utter beauty, utter rest ;
How guard for ever this intense
One hour within the turbulent breast ?

Ah, but the hour is with me yet,
Surely the dial's shadow stays!
My living heart cannot forget
This hour of hours, this day of days.

THE green recesses of the downlands
fold it,
Forsaken, old and grey ;
Only the moon and journeying sun be-
hold it
In its serene decay.

No cries of birth or death, of pain or
passion,
Unlock the stillness deep ;
It is as though life's nurse, in nurse's
fashion,
Had lulled the world to sleep.

Sleep, most divinely still, hath laid her
finger
Upon the lintel low ;
Dreams only in the vacant chambers linger,
Visions of long ago.

All music voiced about the woodland
 spaces
Sounds to the one same note ;
Peace, like a bird, hallows the lonely places
With gentle, throbbing throat.

No noise of grief or cry of lamentation
Breaks upon this still coast :
Rather the holy hush of consecration
Before the uplifted Host.

OF A GARDEN

WITHIN my garden bounds are set
Sweet memory and sad regret,
And where my orchard blossoms glow
The winds of life for ever blow.

Here falls the rain, here springs the seed:
The perfect flower, the perfect weed,
Rejoice together, side by side,
In equal sunlight satisfied.

The fruit that mingles gold and red
Is born of beauty witherèd:
The fruit that mingles red and gold
Is young because the bough is old.

My garden and the world enclose
Alike the thistle and the rose :
My garden and the world are one
In kinship both of storm and sun.

VANNES

THE bells beat out the vesper hour
Above grey street and windy square :
That sudden tumult in the air
Shook me from golden dreams of power
Long vanished, dreams that seemed to be
The sacred soul of Brittany.

Above the green, dishonoured moat,
Too shamed to take the glint of stars,
A kingdom's flag that signalled wars
Once on the city's walls did float.
Now in the silence nothing stirred
But the lone twitter of a bird.

Ah, not for me these busy ways,
These signs of comfortable ease,
This harvest of a toilful peace,
Monotony of nights and days !
I see again sweep out from Vannes
The war-ships of the Morbihan.

Scattered, enslaved, unconquered still,
The old race held their blood in trust,
And from the soil of battle-dust
Blossomed indomitable will—
The will to hold, as Freedom's fee,
The sacred soul of Brittany.

Above the twilit ways of Vannes
There flows the troubled grey of dreams;
Murmurs, and sighs, and spectral gleams
Waver about the Morbihan:
Still may the visionary see
The sacred soul of Brittany.

IN ANY SEAPORT

LAST night, beside the wood-fire's glow,
With hard and wrinkled lips,
He talked of perils long ago,
Of lost and foundered ships.

He sailed the sleety seas again,
He lolled in tropic heats,
His crooked fingers strove amain
To furl the frozen sheets.

He told of old rat-riddled hulls,
Of rotten ropes and spars,
Until I heard the screaming gulls,
And saw the reeling stars!

And still he talked and still he turned
To fill and fill his glass,
And clearer still the wood-fire burned,
For cold without it was.

And every night he tells his tales,
And here will take his ease
Until for him the last ship sails
To the uncharted seas.

FOR A PICTURE

To S. H. S.

STILL sits she on the barrel brown,
Still glows the level sand,
Still green hills clasp the tiny town
That hugs the seaward land.

There will she always sit and smile
In that bright solitude,
A child whom years cannot beguile
To ampler maidenhood.

Never will that pink frock be changed,
Nor tamed the tangled hair :
Her apron, always disarranged,
Will always flap in air.

For me the seasons change and pass,
For her no change can be—
My little pictured sailor-lass
Who never went to sea!

IN THE EXHIBITION GARDENS, EARL'S COURT

CHATTER and laughter, stir of feet,
White walls with yellow lights aglow,
The music's dull, half-smothered beat,
Entangled shades that come and go,
All merged in vague confusion seem
More unsubstantial than a dream.

From this still nook above the crowd
I watch and wonder: everywhere
The artificial cries aloud—
Even the waftures of the air
Seem breath of some man-made machine,
And all the leaves but painted green.

Yet in the mystic blue above
Eternal beacons pulse and shine;
They see the stately rivers move

Through odorous silences divine,
And where the dewy pastures sleep
They glimmer on the folded sheep.

Yet still I linger, still obsessed
By this untiring masquerade,
Whose mocking spirit of unrest
Lives in the eyes of man and maid.
Rivers and dews and stars shall cease
Ere this wry world acknowledge peace.

HANDS

WHEN the First Delver sadly turned
The virgin soil of earth,
When, in his bitter sweat, he learned
The runes of death and birth ;
When he beheld the dead seed break
Triumphant from the clod,
He half forgot the new heart-ache
In wondering praise of God !

But now the ageing world begins
To ban the toilful hand ;
A vast mechanic spider spins
Ceaseless o'er sea and land.
Beauty may pass, and art be hurled
From the revolving wheel :
One pattern must be all the world,
All signets bear one seal.

For me who lag beside the way,
These hands are still content
Gladly to serve their little day
Whatever task be sent.
I make, I mar, I fail, I strive,
Half foolish, half divine :
Thank God, they prove that I'm alive,
These fashioning hands of mine !

Mr. Edison predicts that all future conquest will be by machinery. The human hand is an economic mistake.

TO PROWL, MY CAT

YOU are life's true philosopher,
An epicure of air and sun,
An egoist in sable fur,
To whom all moralists are one.

You hold your race-traditions fast—
While others toil, you simply live,
And, based upon a stable past,
Remain a sound conservative !

You see the beauty of the world
Through eyes of unalloyed content,
And in my study chair upcurled,
Move me to pensive wonderment !

I wish I knew your trick of thought,
The perfect balance of your ways ;
They seem an inspiration caught
From other laws in older days.

Your padded footsteps prowl my room
Half in delight and half disdain ;
You like this air of studious gloom
When streets without are cold with rain !

Some day, alas ! you'll come to die,
And I shall lose a constant friend ;
You'll take your last look at the sky
And be a puzzle to the end !

A THREE DAYS' GUEST

YOU came, a stranger to our gate,
A weary outcast, lank and thin,
A draggled fugitive from Fate;
We pitied, loved, and took you in.

Once you were very proud, no doubt,
A Persian, quick to mince or purr,
With eyes sedately looking out
Beneath soft brows of tabby fur.

Alas, you fell on evil days,
And, victim to some dire mischance,
Wandered forlorn in unknown ways,
A beauty craving tolerance.

And then you came to us, and lay,
The sorriest vagrant, at our door:
We welcomed you with that display
Of reverence that you knew before,

And offered food with careful art,
Which you as courteously put by :
Alas, your faithful, broken heart,
Had only found a home to die.

A three days' guest, no more ; but then
Your piteous story touched and drew
One corner of the world of men
To kindly, human thought for you.

THE TAÏSHER

O WEARY were the days to me,
The weary days gone by,
Bitter the kirkyard of Portree,
Barren the hills of Skye ;
By day and night, by dark and light,
I lived with those who die.

I saw the black processions pass
Of men that bear the dead :
To other eyes the shaking grass
Shone green without a shade ;
But 'twas my curse to see the hearse
Of coffin'd man and maid.

I knew that he was marked for death,
That she who gladly drew
The honey of the morning's breath
Would sup on graveyard rue.
I, living, moved 'mongst those I loved,
Who knew not that I knew !

O happy hour when I was 'ware,
Blackening the meagre corn,
Of those mute ministers who bear
The dead with eyes forlorn :
I question cried, and they replied,
"It is for you we mourn !"

O weary were the days to me,
The weary days gone by,
Bitter the kirkyard of Portree,
Barren the hills of Skye :
But now I praise this last of days,
The day on which I die !

Taibhsear (Gaelic) = One having Second Sight.

"DON'T 'ee, don't 'ee," zaid I to the robin,
"Teäke thy brother's worm away :
Leave off snatchin', look to hatchin' !"
But the robin, curtseyin', bobbin',
Wi' his eyes so bright as day,
Chirrup'd, "What do 'ee zay ?"

Bent an' bobbed, he did, the little rebel,
Bobbed an' bent an' sang to me,
"Leave off snatchin', look to hatchin' ?"
Sang in lovesome, teeny treble:
"Oh, the snatchin' means the hatchin',
Don't 'ee, don't 'ee zee ?"

THE COUNTRYMAN SPEAKS

Written in a copy of Mr. Thomas Hardy's "Time's Laughingstocks."

EES, I've a-thought o' that an' thic,
O' granmer's vrown, an' Sissy's Dick—
The Dick that shamed her :
But, deary me, 't do seem to I
That 'tis the others that should cry—
The volk that blamed her.

Siss did her best—aw, Siss was fine
At buddin' vrom the neighbours' vine :
Why should Siss trouble ?
Vor granmer boasts o' mid-a-beens,
An' little, purty, lwonesome scenes :
So, life's a bubble !

The trouble isn' not to we,
But to the vool volk who do zee
What they've a mind to :
I stir the girt 'ood vire, an' blink,
An' think, an' blink, an' blink an' think
O' joys they're blind to !

THE TRAMP-FOLK

OVER the round world's highways
Ever they pad the hoof,
Trail through the dust and mud-sloughs,
With only the sky for roof :
But east or west, or north or south,
Always you'll find it true—
If you are good to the tramp-folk,
The tramp-folk are good to you.

For, bless you, they're not ambitious,
They have no axes to grind ;
The top of their earthly dreaming
Is a modest hedge-pub blind ;
Work is a human failing,
Human and foolish too :
If you are good to the tramp-folk
The tramp-folk are good to you.

Dazed by the summer sunshine,
Drenched by the autumn rains,
Over the round world's highways
They trail their joys and their pains :
Meet them as journeying brothers—
Always you'll find it true,
If you are good to the tramp-folk
The tramp-folk are good to you.

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